

I. Review

- A. Context – The exhortations and parables found in Matthew 24-25 must be interpreted through the lens or context of the times that Jesus describes in Matthew 24:3-31. This time is known and referenced as the Day of the Lord in the rest of scripture. The parables and exhortations we will look at in this study are given to those who are desiring to be faithful and overcome those days.
- B. Lover of our Soul – We must connect this study to the burning heart of love Jesus has for His disciples. He gave us these chapters and 170 others concerning this time because He loves us and wants us with Him where He is. Yes, this is pastoral council and encouragement but it is given with a fierce burning heart of love and affection for His flock to prepare them for those days.
- C. How to watch – The portion of this discourse we are going to look at in this study directly follows two very strong exhortations to “watch” in order that we are not swept away in His righteous judgment against sin and evil on that day. He is now going to directly follow up with what it looks like to prepare and watch so those dark days do not overtake us. Jesus gives prophetic truth telling us that many will be taken (fall away and be destroyed) by the persecution, tribulation, lawlessness, deception, and offence of the Day of the Lord. Immediately following, He gives an exhortation to be wise and faithful so that we stand firm and overcome in that day.

II. The Wise and Faithful Overcome and are Rewarded (Matt. 25:31-46)

- A. Jesus now wraps up His entire discourse concerning the Day of the Lord and His return. He takes us to the final judgment of all humanity and tells us that it will be a day of rewards to those who were wise and faithful and a day of just punishment to the foolish and wicked. This final exhortation is meant to cause us to look to the evidence that we are those who are watching and living faithfully and wisely. Living a lifestyle of growing in love for Jesus through the intimate knowledge of Him always transforms hearts and causes a true witness of Jesus to go forth in the nations, even in the darkest of days.
- B. As we study this final portion of this teaching of Jesus, concerning those who are ready and watching for His return, we must point out two things. First, this portion is not a parable. It is a clear statement of a future reality and event that you and I will experience. Secondly, the primary application of this is still the Day of the Lord (end of the age and the coming of Jesus) as is the entirety of this discourse (Matt. 24-25).

1. When the Son of Man Comes – Jesus now wants us to think about the two previous parables concerning the Day of the Lord that He just gave us. At the end of each, He returns and brings righteous justice to all. Now He talks to us plainly (not a parable) about that Day of Judgment. There is only one place in the entirety of the Old Testament where the title “Son of Man” comes from. This is where we must go to understand the correct context of this exhortation. (**Dan. 7:13-14**; Matt. 16:27, 19:28, 26:64; Mark 8:38, 14:62; Lk. 9:26, 22:69; John. 1:51, 5:27-29; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7-8; Jude 1:14; Rev. 1:7)
2. He will Sit on the Throne – Multiple scriptures speak of the coming of Jesus or the age of humanity that comes after this one. They all carry the clear theme of the Messiah ruling the earth (not heaven) in perfect righteousness. He is coming to sit on the throne and rule the earth. (Ps. 9:7, 45:1-9; Is. 9:6-7, 32:1; Jer. 23:5-6, 33:15; Zech. 6:13, 9:9; Rev. 3:21, 19:11, 20:11)
3. Of His Glory – The way that Jesus rules will be glorious and will bring Him great praise and renown. God’s glory is biblically understood as His nature and character and actions that display His nature and character. The pinnacle display of God’s glory in the age to come will be the righteous judgment that comes forth from the governmental throne of the earth. (Ex. 15:11; Is. 24:16; Pro. 11:10; Ps. 58:10, 68:1-3, 96:10-13; Rev. 11:17-18; 15:3, 16:5-7; 19:1-6)
4. All the Nations will be Gathered – There is constant debate of the timing of this judgment, and in my opinion this debate has no practical bearing. The clear point is that we all will stand before this throne of judgment and the weight of this is meant to strike out hearts with sobriety. Also, the judgment of nations speaks of the judgment of all men everywhere, not judgment upon certain nations. (Ecc. 11:9, 12:14; Ps. 7:6-8; 9:7-8; 50:3-6; Acts. 10:42, 17:13; Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; 1 Pet. 4:5; Rev. 20:11-15)
5. Separate Sheep from Goats – Figuratively, God refers to His people as His sheep or flock multiple times. It was a very regular practice of livestock owners of that day to separate the goats and sheep at various times for various reasons. Goats are known for eating anything and everything compared to sheep who only eat grass. Goats are also known for being aggressive and abusive to other livestock. (Ps. 78:52; Ezek. 34:17-22; John 10:14, 27)

6. Come Inherit the Kingdom – The great reward given to them is to receive an inheritance in the Messianic reign of Jesus on the earth. This is one of the greatest rewards or promises given in the scriptures. This is the reality that is to be our great hope and anchor for our soul through days of difficulty. There is an essential tie between the saints who will be wise and faithful in the day of the Lord and this hope. The saints have set their heart on the coming Kingdom. As Jesus gives this reward, the great hope of their hearts and souls becomes an eternal reality. (Matt. 4:23, 24:14, Mark 1:14, Lk. 8:1; Acts. 24:15; Phil. 3:20-21; Col 1:27; Heb. 6:16-20; 1 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:2, 2:11-15, 3:7; 2 Pet. 3:12-14)

7. I was Hungry, Thirsty, Stranger, Naked, Sick, and in Prison and you Cared for Me. – Here we must understand that Jesus is still talking about being wise and faithful to cultivate intimacy and love with and for Himself. In the timeline and events that Jesus gave in Matthew 24, He talks about a group of His disciples who are wise and faithful through the final days as bold witnesses of the coming Kingdom to every nation. In other words, what they carried on the inside was being manifest externally. Without this understanding it is easy to think that Jesus is saying that salvation is obtained through works of justice. Of course this would be a great error and a deviation from the foundation of salvation by grace through faith, not by works. What is being highlighted here is the scriptural principal that love for Jesus transforms our hearts in the love of God, and by default, we love others the way He loves others. (Matt. 22:36-40)
 - a. Obedience from the Heart – At the center of the promise of the new covenant was the new heart through which the righteous and loving ways of God would flow out. It is essential to understand this reality or you will end up in a spirit of religious legalism. This manifests when you take it upon yourself to walk out obedience to God's righteousness in order to show Him, or prove to Him, that you love Him through your actions. The great desire of God's heart that accompanied the promise of the new covenant is hearts that obey God's ways by default as a result of abiding in His love.
 - Dead Heart Works – (Is. 1:11-18, 29:13, 66:3; Ezek. 33:31 Mal. 1:10; Matt. 15:9, 23:27-28; Col. 2:16-3:17; Heb. 6:1; 1 Tim. 1:16)
 - Promise of New Heart – (Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:25-30; Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 26:28)

- Transformed Heart Works – (John 13:35; Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 4:9-10; Jam. 2:14-26; 1 John 2:3-11, 3:10-24, 4:7-16; Rev. 3:1)
8. When Lord? – Jesus tells the sheep that the works of righteousness and justice that they did out of His love that flowed out of their hearts for their neighbor were acts of love for Him. This response also brings further proof to the prior point. The works they were doing flowed out of them by default, rather than by religious intention, because they did not know what He was referring to. (Prov. 14:31; Matt. 6:3; Mark 9:41; John 21:15-17; Heb. 6:10)
 9. Inasmuch as You did it for My brethren, You did it to Me – He highlights the fact that they did for the “least of these, my brethren”. Some believe that the “brethren” He is speaking of is the Jewish people since it is clear that Jesus is ethnically Jewish and the Jews will be heavily persecuted in the last days. Others believe that it speaks of all mankind. Jesus refers multiple times to those who do His will as His brothers and sisters. (Matt. 12:49-50; Mark 3:34-35; Acts. 9:4-5)
 10. Depart from Me into Everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil – Jesus tells us that the eternal fires of hell were not meant for people, but for the Devil and his angels. However, those who choose to partner with Satan and his ways will receive the same justice as Satan will receive. (2 Sam. 14:14; Is. 5:13-14; Ezek. 18:23, 30-32, 33:11; John 8:44; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6; Rev. 20:10-15)
 11. You did not Care for Me – Once again, the outflowing of the love of God is what is in view here, not justification by works. The goats never had, or lost, love and intimacy with Jesus formed through the wisdom and faithfulness of watching, and therefore no true outward actions of love resulted. The love of God was not in them because they were not abiding in it through a relationship with Him. (See Point 7a)